

November 10, 1900

*The Great Boer War. By A. Conan Doyle. London: Smith and Elder*

This occasionally mistaken, but always moderate and dignified work can only be properly appreciated if we consider who and what Mr. Conan Doyle is. He is something more than the only author since Dickens who has created a character of whom every one has heard. He is one of the embodiments of that tendency, sound and useful originally, towards the poetry of the Savage, otherwise called the Bachelor; the poetry of masculine sport and independence which was the really healthful and necessary work of the late Mr. Rudyard Kipling.

Mr. Conan Doyle's defence of prize-fighting and Mr. Kipling's defence of the war were, of course, only wild allegoric paradoxes, intended to emphasise by their very oddity a genuine tendency in the cultured as well as the uncultured, towards the masculine standpoint of the ethics of war and hunting, the idea that we, in praising the poetry of womanhood and the romantic relations, have, perhaps, neglected the dumb primeval poetry of our own friendships and feuds. Even Stevenson, in so long keeping the feminine excitement out of his stories, belongs to this movement; and "Sherlock Holmes" is, in lighter matters, the best type we have of cunning and self-reliance in civilization, of the romance of savagery in a city. No one expects that a writer like Mr. Doyle can have a hyper-ideal view of life, and it is not surprising if both he and Mr. Kipling tend in politics in a somewhat tribal and militant direction. But the difference in their two fates is quite startling. At a certain point of this river of average manhood it is crossed by the shallow and frothy stream of a temporary Jingoism. Mr. Kipling has been completely whirled away on the smaller stream, and is now somewhere making observations, dangerously fresh and brilliant, about the Boers reading the Bible and only shooting from behind rocks. Mr. Conan Doyle goes on down the main stream of his philosophy, such as it is, of an admiration for manliness, and therefore an admiration for the Boers. Mr. Kipling is an Imperialist, and he calls the last slaughter of Cronje's forces at Paardeberg "a satisfactory big killing." Mr. Doyle is also an Imperialist and he says of those forces, "Thus they passed out of their ten days of glorious history."

Mr. Conan Doyle is a supporter of the war, and consequently on a large number of points his conclusions are not ours. But in the presence of the general ferocious triviality which confuses this question, we are far more inclined to congratulate Mr. Doyle upon the honourable reverence that he again and again expresses for the conquered than to argue with him about threadbare diplomatic points. It is curious, perhaps, to hear any man apply the adjectives "grave and measured" to Sir Alfred Milner's remarks about the Outlanders being helots, a remark the only excuse for which is that Sir Alfred Milner is old enough to have forgotten what helots were. But we almost invariably find (what is not too common) that Mr. Doyle's Imperialism is a matter of opinion, not a matter of moral colour-blindness. For example, he considers the Majuba Settlement unwise and expresses that view firmly, but he indulges in no childish goriness about "avenging Majuba." Whether or no he is a Christian, he is at any rate a sportsman. He knows that the coarsest prize-fighter that came of our blood was expected to bear no malice for a fair beating.

In his description of the war itself Mr. Conan Doyle shows, as a pure artist, the same virile simplicity. He does not indulge in that extraordinary art of "wordpainting" which has poisoned the work of so many war-correspondents, the literary lunacy which hunts the wrong word as simple people hunt the right, and avoids the vulgarity of speaking of crafty generals and bursting shells by the simple expedient of speaking of crafty shells and bursting generals. Mr. Conan Doyle tells the tale of war

simply and he has the reward of success for a very obvious reason. The essence of warlike poetry is rapidity. This dainty and elaborate movement of the diction is open to objection, even when the writer is engaged on the higher work of describing the profligacies of some neurotic of Upper Tooting; but when the whole force of the situation is in its instantaneousness and dazzling decision, a clever adjective is like a caltrop to a charge of cavalry. It interrupts and even unseats the warrior. Mr. Conan Doyle's descriptions have the true military rush and simplicity like the line of an old war-ballad:-

"And dark with winter was the flow-  
Of Iser rolling rapidly."

The "descriptive" correspondent would have written it:—

"And fat with frost-mud was the flow  
Of Iser tottering huskily."

If guns "sneeze" at a man no doubt he is struck by the artistic comparison. If they shoot at him, they hit him.

We value profoundly, as we have said, the chivalrous tone of Mr. Doyle's book, because he represents, since Mr. Kipling's mysterious collapse, that muscular school which should take the Boers under its particular protection. A man like Cronje should have been and would have been, in Mr. Kipling's best days, a delight to that author. He has all Mr. Kipling's favourite virtues and, by a supreme touch of fascination, he has committed all Mr. Kipling's favourite crimes. Mr. Doyle, however, stands forth to-day as the champion of the secrets of a strong race. The question is far deeper than mere negative morality. Cronje is not filled with moral delicacies, and he is by no means a favourable specimen of the Boer. But comparing, in the broadest human and anthropological spirit, the hero of the tremendous Thermopylae of Paarderberg with Mr. Beit or the late Mr. Barnato, what can any thinking person say of the transfer of influence in that country except the two lines of Goldsmith?—

"Ill fares the land to hastening woe a prey  
Where wealth accumulates and men decay."

Have we realised that these ragged folk are the real riches of the Transvaal? Can we work the mines of the human gold?

February 2, 1901

*National Life From The Standpoint Of Science. By Karl Pearson, F.R.S. London: Adam and Charles Black*

Professor Pearson, in his view of national life, is a well-meaning and vigorous upholder of the great principle of the survival of the fittest. His remarks on the danger of allowing a physically "bad stock" to multiply, though not very precisely expressed, seem certainly to tend towards the idea of conducting the lives and loves of mankind on strict cattle-breeding principles. To our own simple minds it appears rather to depend on whether we wish to produce the same tone of thought and degree of culture in men and in cattle. The virtues which we demand from cows are at present few and simple, and, therefore, we pursue a certain physical regime: if ever we should particularly wish to see cows writing poetry, cows building hotels, and cows speaking in Parliament, we should probably adopt another regime. A random example of the unsuitability of a biological test of so intellectual a matter as civilisation springs at once to the mind. There was born early in this century a man who scarcely had a day's complete health in his life, a perfect example of the "unfit" creature whom some sages would strangle in pure compassion. That man was Charles Darwin, on whose discovery the sages base their action. Their principle would never have been heard of if it had not been the custom to violate it. If this is not a *reductio ad absurdum*, we do not know what is.

But the error of Professor Pearson's philosophy lies deeper. In one sense, indeed, the fight is always to the strong; but strength is exhibited by sticking like a limpet to our own claims, selfish or unselfish, not by trying to alter our claims in order to curry favour with nature. The mammoth would not have been more efficient in the primal competition, but less, if he had suddenly put his head on one side and reflected whether mammoths were on the down grade. The varieties of biology have been produced by animals asserting with blind bravery their ideals of self or family, not by their following the cosmic fashion-plates. The Elk did not go about saying, "Horns are very much worn now," or "All the best people have a divided hoof;" he simply perfected his own weapons for his own defence. The first element in conquering nature is to be natural, and it is not natural to us to become a race of placid scientific murderers. We have, as a race, developed our own set of ideas, one of which is that to a mind of large range the weak are often as valuable as the strong. A sparrow-hawk would not hesitate to eat a thrush, for the simple reason that a sparrow-hawk (having no ear for music) is ignorant of its vocal power, and the only possible use to which he can put a thrush is to eat it. But there is no more biological reason for a poet eating a thrush than there is for his eating Paderewski.

It is the same with Professor Pearson's view of international politics, in which, of course, he approves of crushing and driving out weaker or more barbarous nations. The real objection to the great biological morality of kicking a man when he is down is not merely that it is cruel or insolent, but that it is timid. It is doing something which we none of us like doing or respect ourselves for doing, merely because our hearts are alive with a bestial fear of Nature. Generations of human cattle-breeding will not give a grain of courage to a people who have no moral independence, whose knees knock under them at the sight of a stronger race. We shall be foolish indeed if we think that Nature will be deceived- that, because we have a lion on our crest, she will not know that the heart is a hunted hare. That is the damning and destructive weakness of the modern struggle of nations. The great Empires advance resplendently with their banners and their engines of war, all coming forward at a sublime gallop, to take possession of the world. But, though it seems as if nothing could withstand such an onset of



human valour, it is only a moment after that we realise the truth that this magnificent rush of nations is not a charge at all, but a rout; and through the sound of all the trumpets we can hear roaring in the rear the great devil who is to catch the hindmost.

We warmly sympathise with Professor Pearson in saying that patriotic feeling is "not a thing to be ashamed of;" but we cannot agree with him that it is a protest especially required just now. The trouble at present is not that people think patriotism a thing to be ashamed of, but that they have developed a certain brand of patriotism which is a thing to be ashamed of. But when Professor Pearson says that his attitude is not repellent or immoral, because he desires to see peace and amity between fellow citizens, he falls into one of the oldest errors of rationalism, the notion that the soul is in watertight compartments. He says that we are to oppress and exterminate smaller peoples, but to cultivate the greatest generosity and sympathy towards our countrymen. He might as well say that a father should cut the throat of every other child born to him, but cultivate the greatest generosity and sympathy towards the rest. The common sense of the thing is that if a father were really bullied by any philosophy into pursuing such a course, so sickening would be the humiliation of the process, so dark the conflict between an unbearable shame and a debasing fear, that he could only keep on the right side of a lunatic asylum by hardening himself against every genial sentiment. So it is with the national conscience. If ever we do arrive at such an emotional condition that we hear with perfect indifference or frigid pleasure of a race of brave barbarians dying with pitiful heroism around their rude ensigns, we may be practically certain that a freezing process has set in and that we shall end by hearing with equal coolness of brave Englishmen dying around the Union Jack.

It is true that in old times men could kill their enemies without moral collapse; but that was because they had no intellectual comprehension of what they did. As long as men really believed Frenchmen to be devils it is obvious that they could wipe French blood from their hands like so much mire. But now that they know that Frenchmen are nothing of the sort, that which was once natural becomes unnatural. It was perfectly natural for the mediaeval Catholics to harry the Albigenses as the detestable deceivers of mankind, but surely it would be ludicrous to infer that if English Churchmen were suddenly to commence burning and torturing the Wesleyan Methodists, they would suffer no ethical degeneration from so doing. If they did it at all, it would not be from faith, but from fear, from the oppressive philosophy of Professor Pearson. This ethical terrorism is an atmosphere in which health and strength are impossible. We ourselves believe in a sentimental basis of moral action for one very simple reason, that it is the basis most favourable to sanity and fulness of life. A man who is continent, for example, from a contemplation of the Virgin Mary, is in a vastly better condition of moral hygiene than a man who is continent from reading Ibsen's *Ghosts*, for the very obvious reason that the first man's attention is turned to beauty, strength, and the obvious good, and the second man's attention to deformity, impotence, and diseased perversity. Here, as is generally the case, sentiment is found to be vastly more practical than "practicality." The Terrorist, whether he be the realist teaching us chastity by terror, or the sociological professor, teaching us virility by terror, or the common bomb-throwing anarchist teaching us humanity and benevolence by terror, is the same man in spirit everywhere. He will never succeed, because he begins by drawing out the backbone like a linch-pin.

And just as what produces health in a man is enthusiasm for something healthy, so what produces courage in a nation is enthusiasm for something honourable. Napoleon uttered the fundamental principle of Professor Pearson's school of thought when he said that God was on the side of the big battalions. But the reason why Napoleon fell even before so ordinary a man as Wellington is simply that by inevitable reason the man of principle tends to outlast the man of destiny. Wellington was the type of national strength because he held fast by something beyond the reach of circumstance, even if it were nothing more than a somewhat poker-backed conception of a gentleman. Men in the old times could often be cruel to their enemies without moral collapse, because their minds being limited,

their desires were cruel. But nothing except moral collapse can come of actions being cruel when desires are humane. Here, then, is the weakness in practice of Professor Pearson's theory of national life. It is in the people of principle that the bull-dog quality is bred, not in the people who are always, consciously or unconsciously, watching to see which way the cosmic cat jumps. There is a shrewd secular truth hidden under a theological language in the old saying that man's extremity is God's opportunity. For it is only on those in the struggle for existence who hang on for ten minutes after all is hopeless, that hope begins to dawn. A man who loves his country for her power will always be as weak an adorer as a man who loves a woman for her money. A great appearance of national or imperial strength may be founded on this fair-weather philosophy, but the crown of ultimate triumph and the real respect of Nature will always be reserved for the man for whom the fight is never finished, who disregards the omens and disdains the stars.

May 4, 1901

The decay of patriotism in England during the last year or two is a serious and distressing matter: only in consequence of such a decay could the current lust of territory be confounded with the ancient love of country. We may imagine that if there were no such thing as a pair of lovers left in the world, all the vocabulary of love might without rebuke be transferred to the lowest and most automatic desire. If no type of chivalrous and purifying passion remained, there would be no one left to say that lust bore none of the marks of love: that lust was rapacious and love pitiful, that lust was blind and love vigilant, that lust sated itself and love was insatiable. So it is with the "love of the city," that high and ancient intellectual passion which has been written in red blood on the same tablet with the primal passions of our being. On all sides we hear to-day of the love of our country, and yet anyone who has literally such a love must be bewildered at the talk, like a man hearing all men say that the moon shines by day and the sun by night. The conviction must at last come to him that these men do not realise what the word love means, that they mean by the love of country, not what a mystic might mean by the love of God, but something of what a child might mean by the love of jam. To one who loves his fatherland, for instance, our boasted indifference to the ethics of a national war is mere mysterious gibberish. It is like telling a man that a boy has committed a murder, but that he need not mind because it is only his son. Here clearly the word love is used unmeaningly. It is the essence of love to be sensitive: it is a part of its doom, and anyone who objects to the one must certainly get rid of the other. This sensitiveness, rising sometimes to an almost morbid sensitiveness, was the mark of all great lovers like Dante and all great patriots like Chatham. "My country, right or wrong," is a thing that no patriot would think of saying except in a desperate case. It is like saying, "My mother, drunk or sober." No doubt if a decent man's mother took to drink he would share her troubles to the last. But to talk as if he would be in a state of gay indifference as to whether his mother took to drink or not is certainly not the language of men who know the great mystery.

What we really need for the frustration and overthrow of a deaf and raucous Jingoism is a renaissance of the love of the native land. When that comes, all shrill cries will cease suddenly. For the first of all the marks of love is seriousness: love will not accept sham bulletins or the empty victory of words. It will always esteem the most candid counsellor the best. Love is drawn to truth by the unerring magnetism of agony: it gives no pleasure to the lover to see ten doctors dancing with vociferous optimism round a death-bed.

We have to ask, then, why is it that this recent movement in England, which has honestly appeared to many a renaissance of patriotism, seems to us to have none of the marks of patriotism, at least, of patriotism in its fullest form? Why has the adoration of our patriots been given wholly to qualities and circumstances good in themselves, but comparatively material and trivial, trade, physical force, a skirmish at a remote frontier, a squabble in a remote continent? Colonies are things to be proud of, but for a country to be only proud of its extremities is like a man being only proud of his legs. Why is there not a high central intellectual patriotism, a patriotism of the head and heart of the Empire and not merely of its fists and its boots? A rude Athenian sailor may very likely have thought that the glory of Athens lay in rowing with the right kind of oars, or having a good supply of garlic; but Pericles did not think that this was the glory of Athens. With us, on the other hand, there is no difference at all between the patriotism preached by Mr. Chamberlain and that preached by Mr. Pat Rafferty, who sings "What do you think of the Irish now?": they are both honest, simple-minded, vulgar eulogies upon trivialities and truisms.



I have, rightly or wrongly, a notion of the chief cause of this pettiness in English patriotism of to-day, and we will attempt to expound it. It may be taken generally that a man loves his own stock and environment, and that he will find something to praise in it; but whether it is the most praiseworthy thing or no will depend upon the man's enlightenment as to the facts. If the son of Thackeray, let us say, were brought up in ignorance of his father's fame and genius, it is not improbable that he would be proud of his father being over six foot high. It seems to me that we, as a nation, are precisely in the position of this hypothetical child of Thackeray. We fall back upon gross and frivolous things for our patriotism, for a simple reason. We are the only people in the world who are not taught in childhood our own literature and our own history.

We are, as a nation, in the truly extraordinary condition of not knowing our own merits. We have played a great and splendid part in the history of universal thought and sentiment; we have been among the foremost in that eternal and bloodless battle in which the blows do not slay but create. In painting and music we are inferior to many other nations; but in literature, science, philosophy, and political eloquence, if history be taken as a whole, we can hold our own with any. But all this vast heritage of intellectual glory is kept from our schoolboys like a heresy; and they are left to live and die in the dull and infantile type of patriotism which they learnt from a box of tin soldiers. There is no harm in the box of tin soldiers; we do not expect children to be equally delighted with a beautiful box of tin philanthropists. But there is great harm in the fact that the subtler and more civilised honour of England is not presented so as to keep pace with the expanding mind. A French boy is taught the glory of Moliere as well as that of Turenne; a German boy is taught his own great national philosophy before he learns the philosophy of antiquity. The result is that, though French patriotism is often crazy and boastful, though German patriotism is often isolated and pedantic, they are neither of them merely dull, common, and brutal, as is so often the strange fate of the nation of Bacon and Locke. It is natural enough, and even righteous enough, under the circumstances. An Englishman must love England for something; consequently, he tends to exalt commerce or prize-fighting just as a German might tend to exalt music, or a Flamand to exalt painting, because he really believes it is the chief merit of his fatherland. It would not be in the least extraordinary if a claim of eating up provinces and pulling down princes were the chief boast of a Zulu. The extraordinary thing is that it is the chief boast of a people who have Shakespeare, Newton, Burke, and Darwin to boast of. *Jaunteria*

The peculiar lack of any generosity or delicacy in the current English Nationalism appears to have no other possible origin but in this fact of our unique neglect in education of the study of the national literature. An Englishman could not be silly enough to despise other nations if he once knew how much England had done for them. Great men of letters cannot avoid being humane and universal. The absence of the teaching of English literature in our schools is, when we come to think of it, an almost amazing phenomenon. It is even more amazing when we listen to the arguments urged by head masters and other educational conservatives against the direct teaching of English. It is said, for example, that a vast amount of English grammar and literature is picked up in the course of learning Latin and Greek. This is perfectly true, but the topsy-turviness of the idea never seems to strike them. It is like saying that a baby picks up the art of walking in the course of learning to hop: or that a Frenchman may successfully be taught German by helping a Prussian to learn Ashanti. Surely the obvious foundation of all education is the language in which that education is conveyed; if a boy has only time to learn one thing he had better learn that. We have deliberately neglected this great heritage of high national sentiment. We have made our public schools the strongest walls against a whisper of the honour of England. And we have had our punishment in this strange and perverted fact, that while an unifying vision of patriotism can ennoble bands of brutal savages or dingy burghers, and be the best thing in their lives, we who are- the world being judge- humane, honest, and serious individually, have a patriotism that is the worst thing in ours. What have we done, and where have we wandered, we that

have produced sages that could have spoken with Socrates and poets who could walk with Dante, that we should talk as if we have never done anything more intelligent than found colonies and kick [negroes] We are the children of light, and it is we that sit in darkness. If we are judged it will not be for the merely intellectual transgression of failing to appreciate other nations, but for the supreme spiritual transgression of failing to appreciate ourselves.



May 18, 1901

*"Patriotism and Ethics," By John Godard. London: Grant Richards. 5s*

Every kind of moral and personal credit is due to Mr. Godard for his courage and conscientiousness in publishing this interesting book at this time. I cannot pretend to accept his theory; which is a proposal for the dethronement of the whole virtue of patriotism. But the shock of a logical challenge can do nothing but good to a virtue like patriotism, especially when that virtue is almost trampled to death, as at present, by inanities disguised in its costume. We hear much of saying "the right thing at the right time;" but there is a considerable value in the man who says even the wrong thing at the right time.

But there is, before I proceed to any details, one error which spoils much of Mr. Godard's book from a philosophic point of view. It is that he, like His Majesty's Ministers, appears to think the present Transvaal war a great war. Judging from the enormous amount of space occupied in his pages by this silly and disastrous adventure, one would think that there never had been a national enterprise in the world before. Patriotism can be tested by the Transvaal war just about as much as Christianity could be tested by Mr. Baxter's prophecies of the end of the world. Mr. Godard had undertaken to study the whole nature of patriotism, and it was necessary for him to take some great theory of patriotism and systematically examine it. Some of the greatest men the world has seen have written upon patriotism—Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, Milton, Victor Hugo, Herbert Spencer, John Ruskin. And Mr. Godard calmly selects for detailed study a lecture given by Mr. Chamberlain. Mr. Chamberlain does not pretend to be a philosopher; his opinion on patriotism has no more special value than his opinion on the Royal Academy. It need hardly be said that I entirely agree with Mr. Godard's spirited denunciation of the present war, of Jingo intolerance, of the brutality of the idiots who wrecked Peace meetings. But what have these things to do with patriotism? What has Imperialism to do with patriotism? What have sky-larking crowds to do with patriotism? Above all, what particular connection is there between Mr. Chamberlain and patriotism?

This is the primary and superficial objection to Mr. Godard, that he has meekly accepted the theory of the Government that the war is a great trial of English patriotism, instead of being, as it is, a vulgar and dirty experiment in a corner, different in no way from other frontier experiments except in the arrogance of its terms and the magnifying-glass of morbidity through which it is regarded. Mr. Godard, if he wished to study patriotism, should not have taken one paltry colonial squabble out of history, as one takes lots out of a hat; he should have reviewed the great wars of history in something like their proper proportion. But one thing is at least certain. If Mr. Godard does not think patriotism is a precious virtue, his sympathy with Boer resistance is inexplicable. He passionately, and most justly exclaims, "Does 'justice' decimate a nation because it refuses unconditionally to submit to a foreign yoke?" But if patriotism has no value a foreign yoke has no injustice. "Can we contemplate," he continues, "the absolute annexation of the territory of two foreign States, 'a penalty so extreme as to be without parallel in the history of modern nations since the partition of Poland?' " It is the opinion of many, including myself, that annexation is far too great a penalty. But if patriotism has no sanctity, it is not a penalty at all. If the lines between nations are really as needless and arbitrary as Mr. Godard represents, it is no more cruel to take over a Boer farm from the Republic to the Empire than to transfer a particular street from Fulham to Hammersmith. If there were a passionate patriotic feeling in Hammersmith; if the inhabitants delighted in boasting that the flag of Hammersmith had never fallen in war, that the women of Hammersmith were the most beautiful and the wines of Hammersmith the most

rejoicing in the world, then I myself should thoroughly sympathize with Hammersmith, entertaining, as I probably should, similar convictions about South Kensington. But presumably Mr. Godard would not. He considers any peculiar attachment to a nation narrow and immoral. He must, therefore, I infer, consider the present resistance of the Boers a hideous and ghastly thing, the deluging of a whole country with blood by madmen fighting for a detestable prejudice. I do not.

I am very little terrified by Mr. Godard's catalogue of the wars and woes wrought by patriotism. Of all methods of testing a great idea this method seems to me the worst. Mankind have always been ready to pay a great price for anything they really thought necessary; catalogues of dead and wounded only show how necessary they thought it. Mr. Godard declares that patriotism is, on account of its cruelties and its pride, inconsistent with Christianity. But if peace is the test, how will Christianity itself stand it? Again, he declares patriotism to be inimical to liberty and democracy. But if peace is the test, how will liberty and democracy stand it? The French Revolution has led to at least as much bloodshed as any national sentiment in the world. Rousseau is at one with a greater, in that he assuredly did not bring peace but a sword.

Mr. Godard wishes us to dethrone patriotism and substitute love of all mankind, because patriotism, he says, is only "reflex egoism." I cannot comprehend this definition. In what sense is patriotism reflex egoism in which the love of humanity is not reflex egoism? If patriotism is exclusive, so is the love of humanity; it stops at the first ape. If patriotism includes pride in being an Englishman, does not the worship of humanity include pride in being a man? If the pride of being an Englishman makes a merit of something not in our control, does not the pride of being a man do the same? If patriotism asserts the interests of the nation, often cruelly, against other nations, does not the service of man assert his interests, often cruelly, against the animal world?

And does Mr. Godard really suppose that if the love of humanity became an universal popular virtue, its expression would not be as vulgar, as heated, as unscrupulous in many cases as that of patriotism? Mr. Godard quotes a list of silly and brutal remarks about President Kruger "singing psalms on the wrong side of his mouth," and puts them to the account of patriotism. They belong, not to the ethics of patriotism, but to the psychology of cads. Does Mr. Godard suppose that if the love for humanity were made the basis of national thought, the fool who had just been saying, "One in the eye for Kruger," would immediately begin to talk in the language of sublime liberality? He would merely change the cant. It would be as easy to represent Kruger as the enemy of mankind as to represent him as the enemy of England. It would be as easy for a ring of financiers with their eyes on a gold mine to pity Outlanders as men as to pity them as Englishmen. It would be as easy to break up the meetings of your political opponents because they were enemies of their kind as because they were enemies of their country. The old cosmopolitan Romans boiled Christians in oil because they were the foes of mankind. The French Revolutionists burnt priests in straw because they were the foes of mankind. These things do not arise either from the love of country or the love of men, but simply from folly, intemperance, vagueness and the heart of man deceitful above all things. Let Mr. Godard look abroad on Europe at this moment. There exists a school who hold, doubtless with entire sincerity, the pure love of humanity which he recommends, to the exclusion of all national preferences. The form it takes is to blow to pieces with dynamite hundreds of harmless people whom they have never seen. "Let patriotism be subdued," says Mr. Godard. "Let it be removed from the pinnacle of a virtue and be replaced by humanitarianism, and there shall dawn the day of peace on earth and goodwill to men." And of this cosmopolitan philosophy the first fruits are the Dynamiters.

Of some of Mr. Godard's arguments I will not speak at length, for we think he must have employed them in some haste. We cannot see the philosophical bearing of such a remark as that "patriotism fights against the best interests of the *patria*." It seems to us like saying that we dislike total abstainers because we find they all drink. In that case it would not be total abstinence that we disliked,

but drinking. If certain so-called "patriots" work against the *patria* the case against them does not lie in the charge that they are patriotic, but in the charge that they are not.

The fact is that Mr. Godard has erred by confusing two things. Christianity is a symbol, the dim and shifting symbol, of a certain love of all things, a certain loyalty to the universe to which we all rise in our higher moments. It is not the love of humanity, it goes out to cats and tadpoles. It is an inspiration far too mysterious to be bridled or counted upon; far too certain to be demonstrated; far too perfect to be praised. It has nothing to do with practical politics or material privileges; it extends itself with a calm conscience to the creatures we burden for transport and slay for food. It is a moment in which we realize our kinship with the stars and the stones in the road; in which our sensitiveness runs like a maze of nerves over the whole Cosmos until a falling star or a stricken tree is like a wound upon our bodies. But this gigantic self is a thing that even the greatest and purest only realize at certain seasons. It does not and cannot have anything to do with those working loyalties which we have to preserve in order to preserve our mode of life. That terrible truce in which the lion lies down with the lamb is a vision, not a daily rule. For natural purposes, we assert our family against our fellow-countrymen, our country against humanity, humanity against nature.

Mr. Godard never seems to realize that he does belong to a country. Great Britain is no more a geographical area than the Order of the Jesuits or the Cocoa Tree Club. Like them, it is a centre of power, numbering certain persons within its rules and responsibilities. It is not humanity which prevents Mr. Godard from being knocked down with a bludgeon; it is his country and his country alone. It is not humanity that makes Mr. Godard pay for a dog-license, it is his country and his country alone. The only real error of Mr. Godard is that he calls upon a mere abstract sentiment, however natural and beautiful, to take the place of what is a necessary working sentiment designed for certain definite relations of life. It is like saying, "Let a soldier's obedience to his officers be removed from the pinnacle of a virtue and replaced by a love of all living things." Patriotism is obviously a virtue so long as there is a *patria*. Mr. Godard seems to think that a nation will remain strong and independent automatically, without any assistance from patriotism. I should be inclined to ask what is keeping the Boer nation in existence at this moment.

The bill which Mr. Godard counts up against modern Jingoism is long and heavy. But of all the crimes it has committed, none is so black and ruinous as this; that it has made good and able men like Mr. Godard turn against patriotism itself. About patriotism itself I will say one thing only, on behalf of those like myself who are Nationalists at home and abroad. We also have had to breathe in a stifling vulgarity; to see a thousand faces fixed in one fatuous sneer. We also have had all the temptations possible to intellectual rebellion or to intellectual pride. If we have remained steadfast in a monotonous candor, we cannot claim that we were strengthened by ethical subtlety or new-fangled emancipation. We have remained steadfast because voices older than the hills called us to this spot; here in this island was to be our glory or failure. We have eaten its bread and been made wise with all its works. And if we are indeed near the end, and the madness of cosmopolitan materialism, the spirit of the present war, be indeed dragging our country to destruction, we can only say that at the end we must be with her, to claim our portion in the wrath of God.



June 1, 1901

*Songs of the Sword and the Soldier. Collected and edited by Alexander Eagar. London: Sands and Co. 3s. 6d.*

There are many very high-minded people who consider all poetic glorifications of battle alike horrible and foolish, to whom the hero striking down the spoiler and the patriot falling with his country's fall are on one level of brutality with braves and buccaneers. To take such a view as this appears to me a far greater cruelty to our kind than war itself. It is better to have some brotherly understanding of the enthusiasms of men than merely a grandmotherly caution about their bones. It is better even to respect men's souls and despise their bodies than, after the manner of some humanitarians, to respect their bodies and despise their souls. A book of genuine war-songs, such as Mr. Eagar's volume now before us, is or should be a catalogue of the things that men have loved more than life. Such a book cannot be degrading if it be genuine. The idea that the glorification of the soldier in literature and society is merely an admiration of killing, of brainless destructiveness, will surely not endure scrutiny. Butchers are not heralded with a roll of intoxicating drums. Rat-catchers are not decked out by society in scarlet and gold. The Public Executioner is not a favourite with ladies. As all the trades which kill without risk to themselves are despised rather than honoured, it would seem reasonable to conclude that the thing which is admired in the soldier is not the accomplishment of killing, but the more elegant accomplishment of being killed. There is no particular view of militarism involved in this matter. It cannot be to any of our interests to do an injustice to human nature.

But a collection of war-songs demands the most serious and fastidious examination. In a sense, if I may use a phrase that may amuse many, war is a sacred thing. It is the ultimate, which should not even be named except in an atmosphere purified from every breath of frivolity or malice. To mix up good and bad war-songs, cries that have come from the very heart of a people, with fatuous jingles that have amused a people's imperial leisure, is to commit the worst of profanities. A man has only one life, and he can do nothing so solemn as to stake it for an object he thinks worthy. The worst infamy of Jingoism is that it has encouraged an idle theatrical way of looking at this sacrifice, as if a man had nine lives, like a cat. Mr. Eagar should have remembered this distinction more clearly: it would have prevented him from mingling good wine with bad soda water. I would as soon see a man playing skittles with the cross of St. Paul's as pitching and tossing and playing with the sword as Mr. Eagar plays with it. Indeed, both the cross and the sword are in the same relation to mankind: they are horrible and ungainly tools, made beautiful by the vast and subversive power of human love. Nothing more intrinsically repulsive can be thought of than nailing a man to a wooden stake. Nothing more hideous can be conceived than violently disorganising his anatomy with an iron spike called a sword. But the transformation which pity and self-sacrifice has made even in the bodily aspect of these objects is one of the most gigantic of the triumphs of man's moral imagination. I am proud to belong to a race that could so teach its soul to teach its eyes. But these symbols are revered because they are rare; because they represent a terrible wager possible only in the last resort. The curse of Jingo poetry is that it makes an unreal and fashionable thing of the appeal by battle. Can anyone conceive a more appalling pantomime than a fashion of being crucified?

Beyond this primary fault of a somewhat indiscriminate selection, there is little to be said against Mr. Eagar's bright and readable anthology. The one great gap in it, a gap that I can in no way comprehend and find it difficult to excuse, is the entire absence of any example of the noble old ballad-



poetry of England and Scotland. A book of war poems without "Chevy Chace" is monstrous at the first glance, like a man without an arm. Not only should these old ballads have been represented because of their bony strength, their salt and shrewd humour, their rude and yet ringing metrical movement, but because they especially would give a shock of shame to the elaborate virulence of the war-poetry of the moment. It never crosses the mind of the English minstrel who tells the story of "Chevy Chace," or the Scotch minstrel who tells the story of "Kininont Willie," to doubt that his enemies are his equals. A strange camaraderie in destruction makes killing itself good-tempered. To the English of the Middle Ages the Scots presented an appearance very similar to that of the Boers: they were poor, obstinate, often cruel, sometimes accused of treachery. Yet the petty poets who ate with the footmen of Scrope and Percy spoke of the enemy with an international breadth, a true magnanimity of literature, miles over the heads of the songs shouted in the great illuminated theatres of our great modern Empire. They did not, like the more chivalrous of modern Jingoists, admit the bravery of the enemy, they boasted of it. The writer of "Chevy Chase" seems to exult in the proud words of Douglas and in the solemn obeisance which in the face of the whole battle, Percy made to his corpse. There is one touch which I think especially unthinkable in a music-hall song.

Thus did these two great captains die  
Whose courage none could stain.

That natural, unconscious equalising of the two leaders is a point no Jingo could reach.

There are other minor errors in Mr. Eagar's collection. It is a mistake arbitrarily to back off the first verse of Graham of Gartnorie's song, "If doughty deeds my lady please," and publish it as a war-lyric. The whole poem is a description of various ways of pleasing a lady: it gives a list of occupations, concluding with an appeal founded on fidelity and truth. It is, consequently, no more a war-song than the child's rhyme of "Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Sailor" is a war-song. Nor can I understand why "The Wearing of the Green" should be called a song of battle. It is not even a song of rebellion. The whole point of that noble ballad is a haughty submission and a calmness full of unfathomable scorn.

When laws can stay the blades of grass from growing where they grow  
And when the leaves in summertime their colour dare not show

I can hardly bring myself, however, to complain of any mistake which brings before me for a moment the most magnificent of political poems. It is only fair to add that Mr. Eagar has balanced these misinterpretations and omissions by including many lyrics which are not commonly known to Englishmen and which are well worth knowing. I am particularly grateful for having my attention drawn to two poems by Paul Deroulede.

Nevertheless, the mind returns, upon the whole, to the conception that Mr. Eagar has mixed up a number of widely different things, and has not even arranged them in any true classification. The titles of the divisions annoy us with their foppery. "Singeth the Praise of the Sword" is the sort of thing that only occurs in boys' novelettes and in the essays of decadents. He has not realised, for example, one great distinction which separates all war-poetry into two classes. In primitive war poetry, such as the Iliad and some of the earlier of the old ballads, man is conceived as being in a state of war. War is not the incident in the Iliad, as it is in a modern romance: war is the background. Spears and banners

stand like grass and trees as mere scenery. The real drama is the drama of hatred or love, or sorrow. But in our later times war, to speak paradoxically, has so fallen into disuse as to become prominent. It is, as we have said, the *ultima ratio*, and it expresses simply the elementary truth about human nature which is expressed by Lewis Carroll's parody in which Hiawatha

Stated that he would not stand it,  
Stated in emphatic language,  
What he'd be before he'd stand it.

We need have no fears in any wholesome civilisation that this shadow of the ancient sword will either endanger or desert us. The further it recedes into the twilight of the remote and the unusual, the more strong and sacred will be its hold upon the imagination. It is only because the sword has in our time been stolen and played with by children that it stands in any danger of being merely despised. That in the last resort any one of us might have to summon the savage virtues, that in the last extremity any one of us might have to prove our manhood by ceasing to be, this will always give, with an unfathomable subtlety, a mystery to all our joys and a poetry to all our levities.

June 1, 1901

*To the Editor of THE SPEAKER*

Sir,—I am very grateful to Mr. Godard for the courteous letter in which he replies to my defence of the existence of patriotism as a virtue. The whole of his case appears to hang upon one idea, that because I and other reasonable people think that patriots are at present making fools of themselves therefore we ought to abandon altogether a virtue which we cannot permit to have full play. "To have to subdue or check an instinct lest it should lead to vice scarcely harmonises with the theory that it is a virtue." Now I should have thought that it harmonised extraordinarily well, for I know no virtue in the world that does not have to be subdued and checked. Why, half the vices that exist are only unchecked virtues. If a man had such love for his children that he forged bank notes to enrich them, he would be turning a virtue into a vice. If he was so courteous about the feelings of others that he perjured himself rather than distress the prisoner in the dock, he would be turning a virtue into a vice. If he had such reverence for his mother that he assisted her to commit murder, he would be turning a virtue into a vice. And as a matter of fact every virtue is turned into a vice by millions of silly people, just as patriotism is. Domestic love is made an excuse for swindling, purity for scandal-mongering, public spirit for private advancement. I do not, as Mr. Godard seems to think, choose solemnly between the ethical code and the patriotic code, not having the smallest notion what the latter thing may be. I simply rank my loyalty to my nation, along with that to my kind and my family, in its reasonable place in the ethical code itself. It is quite true that I admire patriotism because I think it ethical. The same applies to honesty.

I admit I cannot yet understand why I should accept Mr. Chamberlain's opinion, or the majority's opinion, about whether I am patriotic. No doubt they would say I am not patriotic; probably they would say that Mr. Godard was not ethical. Of course, the patriotism I think a virtue is my own patriotism, not that of Mr. Chamberlain. So it is with all virtues. It is my own honesty I think right, not the honesty of Highland cattle-lifters; it is my own chastity I think right, not the chastity incumbent on the Grand Turk. Every virtue has its varieties and its irregular history. As to Mr. Chamberlain and his "patriots," I can only say that I detest them primarily because I am a patriot and they are ruining my fatherland.

One word as to the Boers. I repeat that I cannot imagine any decent man doing what the Boers are doing, continuing a sanguinary struggle, unless he was fighting for a virtue. "I sympathise with the Boers, not because they are patriots," says Mr. Godard, "but because independence is a thing to be prized, because liberty is a jewel to be guarded." Surely neither Mr. Godard nor any Liberal can really mean that the Boers had some secret of political perfection, that the government of President Kruger was so full of recondite joys and beauties that a person would be wrong to permit it to be altered at any cost. If, on the other hand, he means by "liberty" the independence of the fatherland, then I entirely agree with him. But in that case he does sympathise with the Boers because they are patriots. To sum up, I think Mr. Godard imagines that when I say patriotism is a virtue I mean that patriotism is virtue. I refer it and everything else to a test of universal good. Only I happen to find that it passes the test with honours.— Yours, &c., G.K.C